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I
776 "Would he want to help us, Mundele?"

"Why not?"

"Is he not exclusively good?" Matali continued.

"If he is so good, should he not listen to you, Matali?"

"Are not misfortunes caused by the ndoki (spirits), Mundele?"

"But is not Nzambi sufficiently powerful to ward off these ndoki, Matali?"

"Are not the ndoki sent against those who have done evil to others? Would Nzambi still be good if he were to ward off the ndoki, who punish the evil-doers? Ve Mundele, ve! Nzambi is good, he does only good, why call upon him?"

This bit of conversation sums up the native's conception of the supreme being. One calls upon him to explain what one cannot understand, but there is no cult devoted to him. Everything that is good for the society and whose source or origin is not known comes from him.

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776 Aside from this spirit, the various tribes believe that there is
778 a multitude of other spirits, some stronger than others, who are all very much concerned with the natives. They are all good in the sense that what is obtained from them is always beneficial to someone, although sometimes it is quite harmful to someone else. For this reason the native has created nkisi [Ed., fetish] and ndoki.

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776 The fetisher is supposed to be able to communicate with these
791 spirits. He keeps from them, according to native belief, the secrets of which plants help in healing and who has killed someone. He can obtain from them the punishment of a thief, because such punishment is beneficial to the one robbed. Through their intervention he can assure good fishing, guarantee rich hunting, facilitate childbirth, heal the sick, etc., or, on the other hand, make any enterprise fail.

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776 The native believes that success of any kind is granted by these
791 spirits. He attempts, therefore, to secure their good graces as
778 much as possible. Before hunting, fishing, childbirth, etc., he goes to the fetisher. For a fairly high fee, the latter calls upon the spirits and hands over the appropriate nkisi. If the results do not conform to his expectations, the native blames [21] neither the fetisher nor the nkisi, but a ndoki more powerful than the nkisi invoked. [Ed., a passage is omitted here.]

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The intervention of the nkisi or ndoki is only a temporary one. Once an undertaking has been successfully carried out, the native has no further use for the object given to him by the fetisher to insure success. On the next occasion he will go back to the fetisher and ask for a new nkisi, which he would always like to be more powerful than the ndoki. Unfortunately the fetisher cannot find such an all-powerful nkisi. A spirit that he has invoked with success for years, whose power seems inexhaustible,

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Fig. 15. Implements of Diapolo, Basakata Fetisher of the Bokoro Region.

will one day fail him. Five, ten, fifteen times success has followed the invocation, and then, there it is, an enterprise under the same auspices fails miserably. A new nkisi, more powerful, has become ndoki, and the native returns to the fetisher and demands that he do better, always better! With the exception of certain figurines carved in wood and used as hunting fetishes, the physical representation of nkisi consists of an assortment of the

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M 778 of the most disparate and incongruous objects, [22] white, black, or red clay, ngula /Ed., redwood powder/, chicken feet, heads, beaks, claws, and feathers, shells, palm nuts, etc., all mixed together in a large pot or in an old worn basket. It is from this magic treasure that the fetisher takes a pinch or two which he wraps carefully in a little bag and hands over to those who resort T [778] to him. As for the human figurines so often found in the huts of the Bateke and Banfumu, we do not believe that they are fetishes. In our opinion, they are guardian figurines for children, carved before their birth and preserved until they reach marriageable age.

M 791 824 Some fetishers manage to gain quite a reputation, and their services are purchased for a very high fee. They are familiar with the properties of certain plants, and they keep this knowledge secret and exploit it as much as possible. It would be wrong to believe that the fetisher's practices are all based on mystification.

M 278 695 Ebandia, the high chief of the Mosengere, knew the secret of certain poisons. He knew effective remedies for certain kinds of festering wounds; he proportioned the quantity of poison at ordeals so as to make its action violent or slow, and he was familiar with an antidote which cancelled out the effects of the poison.

M 278 695 684 A few hours before our arrival at Penge, Ebandia had subjected [23] one of his wives to trial by poison, on the mere suspicion that she might have gone too far with a native during a slightly prolonged stay in the forest. Ebandia accused her of adultery, prepared the beverage, and compelled the poor woman to prove her innocence by taking the poison. The unfortunate creature rebelled. A quarrel arose, and the village natives, when informed of the matter, protested against it, to no avail, however. The old tyrant carried out the ordeal. He had been notified of our impending arrival, and after allowing the unfortunate woman to suffer horribly for nearly two hours, he gave her the antidote. Five hours later, all the effects of the poison were gone. [Ed., the text is not translated from the last paragraph, page 23, to the second paragraph, page 26.]

T 764 [26] In general the natives have a kind of cult of the dead. In the Bateke-Banfumu region, the corpse is wrapped in fabrics. The more important the deceased person is, the larger the bundle. His whole wealth in fabrics goes with him to the grave. Prior

000 the same rights as the other children of the polygynist.

595 The polygynist always sought to increase the number of his
556 wives, for his prestige rose and his fortune increased in that manner.
593 If anyone in civilized lands seeks to enlarge his fortune, this is done, people say, in order to insure the future of his children. The native thinks little about that; his primary idea is to enjoy himself and to surpass others in prestige and esteem. As far as the future of his children is concerned, there are polygynists who possess twenty or thirty wives or even more, and sometimes they have only one or two children. Also it is little in keeping with their notions to care for the future; he who is still alive tomorrow must take care of
595 tomorrow then, so they reason. On the contrary, instead of caring
593 for his children, the polygynist often took great trouble to obtain a
584 wife for his son. The son, however, was not yet the owner of his
606 wife; it was, so to speak, only a loan. Not until after the death of his father did he become owner. In some districts, when the father had obtained a wife for his son, he first kept this wife for some time for himself. Only after a few months did he give her to his son. In
595 other districts, when the wife was pregnant by the son, he was obliged
593 to send her for a few days to his father. He was not allowed to bear
606 the honor of fatherhood alone; his father must share that with him.
842 The father reserved for himself the honor of naming all of the chil-
551 dren of his children. In some areas of the Congo, morals were so
835 low and common that the father even kept his own daughters in his harem. This did not occur in Equatorial Africa, but there was a custom that was not much better. The magician was sometimes
583 consulted about the bride price which the father tried to get for his
● 791 daughter, or the brother for his sister.

The magician then gave them the advice that they themselves should first have relations with their own daughter or sister. This custom existed almost everywhere in Equatorial Africa.

583 [535] Bride Price. In general, the daughter was given in marriage upon payment of a bride price. The father had little choice of the future husband of his daughter. The one who guaranteed the most goods in payment was certain to get her. Since, in most cases, the little daughter had not yet arrived at the years of maturity, there was naturally no question of her consent. The bride price was not paid all at once, but gradually during the years while the daughter grew up. Since the daughter was given without her consent

7:Brown M-5 (ca. 1940) 1944 FO32 Mongo FO32
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fear of death would deter him from such baseness. Another sign of the chosen successor is some untoward experience, such, for example, as finding cowrie shells (worn by *nkumu*) in a trap in the forest or a net that had been put out to catch fish.

Nkema Akuke, whether the first of his line or a man succeeding in the office, bears the emblems of his rank. He wears an *ilolembe* (a branch of a special bush) stuck into his belt on the right side and hanging downwards. The special hat, *montolo*, worn by *nkumu* is not yet his to wear, but he wears an ordinary skin hat known as *lopopo*, which is the mark of any elder. This hat may be ornamented with feathers if so desired.

When *Nkema Akuke* decides that he has acquired sufficient wealth to enable him properly to claim the right of being made an *nkumu*, he begins his preparatory arrangements. *Mbili*, a mixture of charcoal with some sticky substance, is smeared over his body with plantain leaves. All ornamented clothing is discarded and a single cloth woven from raffia, and known as *molele*, is worn. He refuses to sit on the benches usually used and instead sits on the bare earth. All this is explained as an attempt on the part of the man about to be raised to the office of *nkumu* to be different from others, a man apart, separate, peculiar, not partaking in the ordinary interests and affairs of his fellow men.

Nkema Akuke now leaves his own village accompanied by all his wives and children, and also by a singer, *nyemba*, who is paid to sing his praises, and by several male Batwa (pygmies), up to half a dozen in number, known as *ntotii* because of their duty of blowing gourds and producing sounds which indicate praise of the great man. This party makes the round of villages wherever relatives are found, and the announcement is made that *Nkema Akuke* is about to become an *nkumu*. This pilgrimage accomplished, a 'doctor' (*nkanga*) is visited by the aspirant to office, who seeks by magic to discover whether it is the propitious time for the ceremony of installation. The whole company retires to the private enclosure at the rear of the house belonging to the *nkanga* chosen, this being the place where he performs his wonders. The *nkanga* resorts to *nsingo*, that particular branch of magic which has to do with reasons for strange and unaccountable phenomena.[1] *Nkema Akuke* now seeks some sign as confirmation of his determination to claim his office at this time. Some native pepper may be wrapped in a leaf or merely covered by it, and left within sight of all, and upon being opened it may be found to have turned into salt, or perhaps it may be some earth that is thus turned to salt. Or a cock may be placed upon *Nkema Akuke*'s head and covered with a basket and thus left for some time. Upon removing the basket it may be discovered that an egg has been laid. All such tests, if successful, will be regarded as indications that it really is time for *Nkema Akuke* to assume the office of *nkumu*, but if the test fails he will usually go ahead with his plans anyhow, fearing the shame that would come to him should he go back to his home after having made the triumphant round of his relatives' homes. However, should he act thus, and he most certainly will, he knows that his days are numbered,

[1] If a man's fields do not produce and he cannot understand why, he will resort to *nsingo*. If it is suspected, for example, that the trouble is caused by someone making 'medicine', an arrow shaft is put into a small hole in the ground, and at each name mentioned, the arrow can be pulled out if the person is innocent, but remains stuck fast in the hole at the mention of the guilty name.

7:Brown M-5 (ca. 1940) 1944 FO32 Mongo FO32
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624 and that he may have no more than a month or perhaps a year in which to live and will surely die speedily.

The special objects attaching to the office of *nkumu*, among these the hat, *montolo*, and stool, *mbata*, are at the same time subject to similar magical arts to determine whether they may be produced for the new *nkumu*'s use. They are not present, being in the possession of the *molembe* which will appoint him, but are mentioned by name. Apart from the *montolo*, no further ceremony is required to identify these objects with their future owner.

[302] The *mingo* ended, the *Nkema Akuke* smears black *mbili* all over his body again, 624 before the rites begin to determine which of his wives is to be known as *Nsono*, 787 the one who will be closest to her husband throughout his days. For this, magic formulae (*bienzako*, sing. *enzako*) are used. All the wives sit round in a circle and the *nkanga* places some irritant such as ground pepper in the eyes of all the women. The wife whose eyes stream most and whose discomfort is also accompanied by a violent [827] shaking of the body is known to be *Nsono*. Here again, lying is believed to be out of the question, for the shaking of the body is something that is supposed to be impossible of simulation, the real being easily distinguished by all from the false. *Nsono* is now stripped of all clothing and her body smeared by the *nkanga* with yellow clay on one side, and with white on the other. A belt of leaves is put round her waist 624 and a small bit of cloth between the legs with each end attached to the belt. Near by 789 a gourd with 'medicine' in it has been standing ready for the next step in the ceremonies, and this is now smeared with white clay, a parrot's feather stuck in the neck, and handed to *Nsono*, who receives it in one hand. Into the other hand is put a section of plantain stalk, into one end of which has been stuck a parrot's feather. A third feather is placed in her mouth so that she cannot speak, greet anyone, or eat. She is now tied with a cord which is held by one of the young men attending *Nkema Akuke*. At this point of the procedure the *nkanga* states his price [791] for his work, which will be in the neighbourhood of one hundred brass rods, worth 435 to-day about fifty francs, but formerly double that amount. The future *nkumu*, accompanied as before, leaves for the village of the *molembe*. *Nsono* starts off at a tremendous pace, for she is now imbued with a sort of frenzied strength, and for this reason has been tied up and put in charge of a strong young man, otherwise she would be off so fast that no one could catch her, and would go into the forest, where she would live for days unseen.

624 In the village of the *molembe* the party all sit in an *ehanga* belonging to one of the elders. This is the place where the Tumba men really live—their houses are just [343] sleeping and cooking establishments, but the *ehanga*, having a roof for shade and no walls, is the place where the men congregate and spend their leisure time. It is also 342 the site of the village smithy, which takes up one end. Here, then, *Nkema Akuke* and his party sit for a day and a night, and neither he nor *Nsono* may eat food or drink [862] wine during this period. Games are played by the *molembe*—mock battles, dances, and [517] songs chiefly of battle, and before the first streaks of dawn appear the group in the *ehanga* begins to march up and down the village singing.

At dawn the whole party, accompanied by a large crowd, make their way to a place in the bush where there is an elevation of some sort. Here *Nkema Akuke* climbs up and takes his stand, accompanied by *Nsono*. Now the *molembe* choose the *Bilepo*